

How can we be sure that the Bible is accurate?

Discussion

1. What are common criticisms of Biblical accuracy?
2. Is it important that the Bible is accurate? Why?

Last week on Word...

We looked at how the Bible was written and assembled to become the document we know it as today. This week we will continue our enrichment by trying to answer a question commonly asked, "How can we know that the Bible is accurate?"

1. Internal Evidence – Scriptural Consistency

• Jesus: the line of Judah, Davidic king

- The scepter shall not depart from **Judah**, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet
Gen. 49:10 ESV
- When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Sam. 7:12-13 ESV
- For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of **David** and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isa. 9:6-7 ESV

Gen. 5, Matt. 1: Adam to Jesus

Adam -> Seth -> Enosh -> Kenan -> Mahalalel -> Jared -> Enoch -> Methuselah -> Lamech -> Noah -> Shem -> Arpachshah -> Shelah -> Eber -> Peleg -> Reu -> Serug -> Nahor -> Terah -> Abraham -> Isaac -> Jacob -> **Judah** -> Perez -> Hezron -> Ram -> Amminadab -> Nahshon -> Salmon -> Boaz -> Obed -> Jesse -> **David** -> Solomon -> Rehoboam -> Abijah -> Asaph -> Jehoshaphat -> Joram -> Uzziah -> Jotham -> Ahaz -> Hezekiah -> Manasseh -> Amos -> Josiah -> Jechoniah -> Shealtiel -> Zerubbabel -> Abiud -> Eliakim -> Azor -> Zadok -> Achim -> Eliud -> Eleazar -> Matthan -> Jacob -> Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

• Jesus: Born in Bethlehem, Born of a Virgin

- But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Micah 5:2 ESV
- Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. Matt. 2:1 ESV

- Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isa. 7:14 ESV
NOTE check context.
- And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” Luke 1:31-34 ESV
- **Jesus: Betrayed for 30 pieces of Silver, Money used to pay a potter.**
 - Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter. Zech. 11:12-13 ESV Note: add context
 - Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.... Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the *thirty pieces of silver* to the chief priests and the elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They said, “What is that to us? See to it yourself.” And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they took counsel and bought with them the *potter’s field* as a burial place for strangers. Matt. 26:14-16, 27:3-7 ESV

2. External Evidence

- **Josephus**
 - Jewish historian born a few years after Jesus died
 - Documented Jewish history
 - “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And then *Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross*, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for *he appeared to them alive again the third day*, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” (quoting Josephus’ “Jewish Antiquities”) (Driscoll, 2008)
- **Tacitus**
 - Roman Historian
 - Wrote a biography on Nero
 - “Therefore, in order to destroy [the rumor that he ordered the great fire to be set

in Rome], Nero blamed the Christians, who are hated for their abominations, and punished them with refined cruelty. *Christ, from whom they take their name, was executed by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius.* Stopped for a moment, this evil superstition reappeared not only in Judea, where was the root of the evil, but also in Rome, where all things sordid and abominable from every corner of the world come together. Thus, first those who confessed [that they were Christians] were arrested, and on the basis of their testimony a great number were condemned, although not so much for the first as for their hatred of humankind.”

- So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Mark 15:15 ESV

• **Manuscripts**

- Extant Manuscripts of Ancient Classics

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Numbers of Copies	Accuracy
Homer	ca. 850 BC	-----	-----	543	95%
Herodotus	ca. 450 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1350 years	8	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Euripides	ca. 440 BC	ca. AD 1100	About 1500 years	9	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Thucydides	ca. 420 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1300 years	8	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Plato	ca. 380 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1300 years	7	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Aristotle	ca. 350 BC	ca. AD 1100	About 1300 years	5	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Caesar	ca. 60 BC	ca. AD 900	About 1300 years	10	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Catullus	ca. 50 BC	ca. AD 1500	About 1300 years	3	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Livy	ca. 10 BC	-----	-----	20	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
Tacitus	ca. AD 100	ca. AD 1100	About 1000 years	20	Not enough copies to reconstruct original
New Testament	ca. AD 60	ca. AD 130	About 100 years	About 14,000	99.5%

(Driscoll 2008)

• **The Dead Sea Scrolls**

- In 1947, a shepherd boy stumbled across jars of scrolls in some caves while searching for a lost goat. The age and quality of many of the scrolls was unprecedented, with some dating as far back as 400 BC, which was as many as one thousand years earlier than any previously discovered scroll. (Driscoll, 2008)
- Book of Isaiah found in the jars was 95% identical to the standard Hebrew Bible we have today and have absolutely no doctrinal differences (apologeticspress.org, 1/23/10)

3. Why is it important that the Bible is accurate?

- Theological importance
 - If God is omniscient, he must know all things. He cannot be ignorant of or in error on any matter.
 - If God is omnipotent, he is able to so affect all things
 - If God is a good and truthful being, he will certainly utilize these abilities in such a way that humans will not be misled by Bible
 - Thus, God can and has influenced the biblical authors' writings in a way that does not jeopardize the author's personality nor allow anything erroneous to enter into the final product.
 - In conclusion, theologically speaking the bible must be fully accurate and reliable or else the Bible would not be fully inspired.
- Epistemological Importance
 - If the Bible is found in error in the areas that can be checked, what can be said about those areas that cannot be checked?
 - Basically, if there are things taught in the bible are not true, we cannot continue to hold to other propositions simply on the grounds that the Bible teaches them. It is not that these statements have been proved false, but that we cannot be certain that they are true.
 - If one leaves supposed false statements unchecked and they turn a blind eye to it, basing their trust on Scripture on blind faith, he makes the Bible immune from disproof, but at the cost of immunity from proof.
 - Thus the fight to prove the Bible to be accurate and reliable is a fight to show that the Bible is valuable. (Christian Theology, Millard J. Erickson, Baker Academic, 1998)

Discussion Questions

- If the Bible is accurate, what does that mean about us and our lives?
- What does that mean about what it says about God and His characteristics?
- Is Biblical accuracy really the thing that is keeping us from believing in the Gospel or is there something else that is holding us back?
- How do we need to grow in our faith that Holy Scripture is accurate, reliable and divinely inspired?
- How can we engage in the theological task proving the Bible to be true?